



CITY TEAMS WITH COMCAST & ITT TECHNICAL INSTITUTE

PARTNERSHIP TO BENEFIT INTERFAITH HOSPITALITY NETWORK

For Immediate Release – March 23, 2012

The City of Salem, ITT Technical Institute, Roanoke Valley Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) and Comcast are partnering to provide technology to homeless families throughout the Roanoke Valley. Through a joint collaboration, families who spend the day at IHN – a day shelter for homeless families located on Clay Street in Salem – now have access to eight computers they can use for employment, housing and educational purposes.

“Comcast is committed to building strong, healthy communities, and access to technology and digital literacy skills is an increasingly crucial component,” said Crystal Gilliam, manager of government and regulatory affairs for Comcast. “Through partnerships like this, we are helping provide local families with encouragement, hope and the chance to create bright and successful futures for themselves.”

IHN is a network of 26 congregations and more than 1,000 volunteers who provide temporary housing and meals to families with children. The organization works with four families at a time providing full-time case management to assist with addressing and overcoming causes for homelessness and creating goals for employment, housing, education in their return to independence.

“We are most grateful for this lab because not only does it give us additional access to the internet, but we’re also getting support from the college to keep the lab maintained,” said Marie Muddiman, IHN Executive Director. “This has truly been a blessing.”

Two years ago, the City of Salem, along with two computer sales and service stores in the city, Computer Works and Valley Computers Service and Sales, began a computer recycling program. The idea behind the collection was twofold – cut down on the amount of e-waste and to equip indigent families with computers.

When ITT Tech heard about the project, staff and students showed up to assist, and ever since the college and its students have continued to lend a hand. More than 100 families and individuals meeting the poverty criteria have received a refurbished computer. As an offshoot, ITT Tech met with the city officials to identify additional community service components the college could support. A computer lab at IHN was identified as need.

“When we decided to move forward with this ‘green project’ we had no idea what to expect,” said City Manager Kevin Boggess. “This project, by many accounts has been extremely successful. We are fortunate to have such giving companies in the City of Salem.”

Students at ITT designed the new lab at Interfaith and incorporated the computers they rebuilt. The grandfather of one of the students even made oak tables to hold the computers. When the computers were installed everyone realized the current internet service at IHN was much too slow to meet the needs of the lab. City officials contacted Comcast to ask for assistance and immediately Comcast agreed to provide services – high-speed internet and cable – free to the homeless shelter.

“I believe that learning the value of giving is an important element to any college education,” says Ron Charpia, ITT Tech College Director. “At ITT Tech, we offer educational programs that integrate life-long learning with knowledge and skills to help students pursue their personal interests and objectives, develop critical thinking abilities, and provide service to their communities

A news conference and open house will be held on Tuesday, March 27 at 2 p.m., at Interfaith Hospitality Network’s home base at 37 E. Clay Street to showcase the lab and to announce plans for future collaborations and computer collections. As the project progresses, IHN plans to open its lab, after hours, to the public for computer classes.

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NEWS CONFERENCE

TO ANNOUNCE DETAILS

TUESDAY

MARCH 27

2PM

IHN – 37 E. CLAY ST.